

FACT SHEET

COEUR d'ALENE RIVER BASIN

EPA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

NOVEMBER 1999

Coeur d'Alene River Basin Update #6

Keeping You Up to Date

This is the sixth in a series of fact sheets from EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) about the study and cleanup of mine wastes related to historical mining practices in the the Coeur d'Alene River Basin in northern Idaho. The study we're doing is called an RI/FS (Remedial Investigation/ Feasibility Study) and it is being done according to the Federal Superfund law that regulates the cleanup of hazardous wastes. EPA is using existing information and input from Federal, State, Tribal and local interested parties to help focus what is being studied during the RI/FS.

By reading these fact sheets, you can stay up to date on the activities related to the study and cleanup. We want you to stay informed so that next year when we finish our studies, you will be able to give us your comments about how the pollution should be cleaned up. Your involvement will help us make good decisions about the areas where you live, work and recreate.

This fact sheet describes work done recently to protect people in the Basin, especially young children, from coming into contact with unsafe levels of mine wastes (such as lead) in soil and water. We have also included updates on important studies we're doing that will help us understand how the land, air and water in the Basin function as a whole system. By understanding how the system works, we can be sure we're making cleanup decisions that will be long lasting and that will also protect the animals and plants in the area.

Cleanup Action Not Just Studies

We've heard from many people who want EPA to take action in areas where we know cleanup is needed, not to just continue with studies.

In This Issue

Keeping You Up to Date	1
Cleanup Action Not Just Studies	1
Understanding the Basin Environment	2
Do You Want Your Yard Tested?	2
Is the Basin a Superfund Site?	3
What About the State of Idaho's Plan?	3
Learn More	3
Contacts	4

Below is a summary of activities EPA is working on to protect residents and communities from levels of metals that may be harmful to their health.

By the end of the 1999 field season, EPA will have:

- ✓ Removed and replaced soil at more than 26 yards in Wallace, Mullan and Osburn
- ✓ Provided 10 homes with a safe source of drinking water
- ✓ Removed and replaced contaminated soil at Wallace City Park and Wallace High School
- ✓ Removed and replaced contaminated soil at Osburn elementary and middle schools
- ✓ Removed contaminated soil, ripped and paved parts of Idaho Fish and Game's recreational sites at Anderson and Thompson Lakes

Also, health advisory signs will soon be installed at many beaches, campgrounds and other recreational areas along the Coeur d'Alene River. These signs were developed by EPA, the State of Idaho, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Panhandle Health District and others. The signs will alert people to

the mine wastes found along the River and explain ways to use these areas safely.

Besides cleanup of high-risk areas, EPA will continue to test residential yards where children and pregnant women reside, as well as daycare centers and schools in the Basin that have not already been tested. Next spring, we will continue

Do You Want Your Yard Tested?

We are maintaining a list of people who want to have their yards or other property tested for metals in the future. Our first priority for testing are homes where children seven years old and younger and/or pregnant women live, because these are the people potentially most at risk. If you want to have your yard tested and you live east of Harrison, call 1-800-424-4372 extension 1237, and leave the following information:

- ☐ Your name
- ☐ The address of the property you want tested
- ☐ Your mailing address if different than the property address
- ☐ Your phone number
- ☐ Whether children seven and under or a pregnant woman lives in the home
- ☐ Whether the water you drink comes from a private well or a public drinking water system

Please also contact Panhandle Health District to find out if your property has been tested in the past. Call (208) 783-0707.



sampling and cleanups at yards and other areas where children may come into contact with unsafe levels of contamination.

Understanding the Basin Environment

Besides looking at how the mine wastes in the Basin may affect people's health (this is called the human health risk assessment), we are also studying how the wastes move in the soils, sediments and water throughout the Basin and how the wastes may be affecting plants and animals (this is called the ecological risk assessment). The USGS (United States Geological Survey) is conducting several studies for the RI/FS under an interagency agreement with EPA. The following is a list of work that has been done for the ecological risk assessment:

- ☐ Last spring, during a time when river flows were high, USGS crews observed how a "plume" of sediments from the Coeur d'Alene River moves through Lake Coeur d'Alene and into the Spokane River.
- ☐ Concentrations of metals and nutrients (such as phosphorus) were evaluated at 25 locations throughout the Basin.
- ☐ USGS studied how metals from the sediments at the bottom of Lake Coeur d'Alene may move back into the lake water.
- ☐ During a major snowmelt-runoff event this past spring, USGS measured stream-flow volume and took water-quality samples at 42 locations within the Basin. Samples were collected at the same time at each location. The sample results will give us a "snapshot" of the river conditions and help us understand how much water and pollution move through the river during high-flow events.
- ☐ The USGS is studying how the water table (groundwater) and rivers and lakes (surface water) in the Basin are connected and how metals move between the two.

- ❑ In coordination with the State of Washington, USGS is also studying metals and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) in fish in Lake Coeur d'Alene and Long Lake.

Results from many of these studies should be available in early 2000.

Is the Basin a Superfund Site?

EPA's legal opinion continues to be that the Bunker Hill Superfund facility does extend to wherever mine waste contamination "has come to be located" in the Basin. However, last fall, a federal district court judge ruled that the Bunker Hill facility is limited to the 21-square-mile area around Kellogg. The judge's decision has been appealed. A decision will not likely be made on this matter until after the first of next year.

While these issues are being resolved, EPA is continuing the RI/FS in the Basin and is using some limited funds for the immediate cleanup needs described above. Over the long term, in order for EPA to use monies from the Superfund Trust Fund for cleanup in the Basin, a site must be designated on the National Priorities List (NPL).

What About the State of Idaho's Plan?

EPA is working with State, Tribal and local governments as well as local communities to determine the best way to approach cleanup in the Basin. We support the State of Idaho in its efforts to identify alternatives to an additional Superfund listing in the Basin and we are working on a funding agreement to provide resources.

EPA's goal is to get cleanup done where it's needed, using whatever reliable means are available. We have not eliminated any options, including Superfund, as potential tools to get the job done.

Learn More

- ☞ Read these fact sheets.
- ☞ Attend meetings of these citizen groups:

Coeur d'Alene Basin Restoration
Project Citizens Advisory Committee
RI/FS Task Force
Contact: Buddy Paul, Chairman,
(208) 667-7990.

Washington Citizens Advisory
Committee
Contact: Michelle Nanni,
(509) 838-4912

- ☞ Go to the library and look at technical documents on the Basin project:

North Idaho College Library
(Administrative Record Site)
1000 West Garden Avenue
Coeur d'Alene, ID

Spokane Public Library
906 West Main Street
Spokane, WA

Harrison City Hall
100 Frederick Street
Harrison, ID

Wallace Public Library
415 River Street
Wallace, ID

EPA's Coeur d'Alene Field Office
1910 NW Blvd., Suite 208
Coeur d'Alene, ID

- ☞ Call the community liaison, Dick Martindale, in Coeur d'Alene at (208) 664-4588.

United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Region 10 (ECO-081)
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101



COEUR d'ALENE RIVER BASIN UPDATE – NOVEMBER 1999

In This Issue

Keeping You Up to Date	1
Cleanup Action Not Just Studies	1
Understanding the Basin Environment	2
Do You Want Your Yard Tested?	2
Is the Basin a Superfund Site?	3
What About the State of Idaho's Plan?	3
Learn More	3
Contacts	4

Contacts

If you have any questions regarding this fact sheet, please call: **Marianne Deppman**, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator at **1-206-553-1237** or toll-free at **1-800-424-4372**, or **Dick Martindale**, Community Liaison, Coeur d'Alene, at **1-208-664-4588**. To ensure effective communications with everyone, arrangements for special assistance can be made by calling EPA's toll-free number above.